

**TOWN OF BURRILLVILLE**

**BUDGET BOARD**

**REGULAR MEETING** of the Burrillville Budget Board held Thursday, February 10, 2005 at the Burrillville High School, Media Center, 425 East Avenue Harrisville, RI.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Arthur R. Hurley, Chairperson; Mark S. Brizard, Secretary; Michael P. Molloy, Member and Matthew R. Trimble, Member.

**MEMBER ABSENT:** Brigitte A. Buxton, Vice Chairperson

**EX OFFICIO MEMBER:** John P. Mainville, Town Finance Director

Arthur R. Hurley, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The Board agreed to dispense with the approval of the minutes from February 3, 2005 as they were not available for this meeting.

**REVIEW SCHOOL DEPARTMENT'S OPERATIONAL AND CIP BUDGET:**

1. Dr. Barbara VonVillas, Superintendent of Schools

**Dr. Von Villas presented to the Budget Board a proposed “maintenance budget” for the School Department that would require a 10.86% increase over last year’s budget. Von Villas emphasized that this was a starting point and that together with the School Committee she hoped the percent increase necessary would decrease as more information became available about next year’s enrollment, the cost of health care and about the number of retirees in the school department. She outlined for the Board the initiatives set forth by the National “No Child Left Behind” Act as well as the Rhode Island Department of Education initiatives that are in large part unfunded but required.**

**Some of the proposed cuts included 2 elementary school positions, 4 all-day kindergarten positions, 3 service provider positions, 3 support staff and 2 fine arts positions. She stated that the result of such cuts would be increased class size, elimination of all-day kindergarten, increased caseloads for counselors, a reduction in the fine arts, an elimination of electives in the middle school, increases in study halls/downtime, a reduction in staff and maintenance, a reduction in sports, and a reduction in technical equipment.**

## **2. Mary Karmozyn, School Committee Chair**

**Karmozyn stated that the School Committee has worked hard with the Superintendent to make the budget work. She realizes that a 10.86% increase is unlikely and asked for the cooperation of the**

**Budget Board to assist in finding a way to make the budget work for the benefit of the students in the school system who have already suffered great losses. She emphasized her reluctance to see all-day kindergarten cut from the budget and noted the importance of working with children while they are young in order to meet the goals set forth by “No Child Left Behind” and the RIDE. She agreed with the Superintendent that because there are so many unknown factors including enrollment numbers, health care increases and uncertainty about retirees, the proposed 10.86% increase is a starting point.**

### **3. Raymond Trinque, School Committee**

**Trinque pointed out for the Budget Board the remarkable things the Burrillville Schools have accomplished, noting that many of the Burrillville Schools are “Governor Commended”. He emphasized that this is an improvement for the system and he would not like to see things begin to move backward because of budgetary constraints. He feels certain that if any additional cuts take place it will be impossible to maintain the high standards that the schools now uphold. He added that while many things have been gained, there are many things that have been lost including woodshop, foreign language offerings, business/typing class offerings, as well as many other elective offerings.**

### **4. Joan Cote, School Committee**

**Cote noted agreement with other school committee members and stated that from a parents perspective it is disheartening to see reductions in sports, music and art and increases in “downtime”.**

#### **5. Paul Couture, School Committee**

**Couture stated that he felt the schools had made too much progress to go backward now.**

#### **6. Dorothy Cardon, School Committee**

**Cardon expressed her pride in the accomplishments of the staff and students and emphasized her commitment to make the budget work and her willingness to work with the Budget Board to make that happen.**

#### **7. Scott Moore, School Committee**

**Moore noted agreement with other members of the School Committee and asked for the Budget Board’s meticulous review of the budget in order to recognize there is no “fluff” or room for cuts. He stated that many of the cuts of the past few years have hurt the system badly and are now “catching up” and starting to negatively impact the effectiveness of the schools.**

#### **8. Matt Trimble, Budget Board**

**Trimble acknowledged the importance of adequately funding the schools and recognized the value of a good education. He stated that many of the specific questions he had regarding the budget are outlined in a written request the Budget Board gave to the Superintendent at tonight's meeting and believes the his questions will be answered when a written response to those questions is given. Trimble did ask the School Committee to consider the enormous impact the 3.9% increase for teachers for 3 years had on the budget and offered that had the increase been even 1% less each year, many of the current cuts proposed might not be necessary.**

#### **9. Michael Molloy, Budget Board**

**Molloy also acknowledged his commitment to education funding. Superintendent addressed Molloy's question about the length of study hall by indicating that it is currently at 46 to 50 minutes per school day.**

#### **10. Mark Brizard, Budget Board**

**Brizard implored members of the School Committee, specifically Ray Trinque, to refrain from issuing inflammatory statements about the budget that serve no other purpose than to confuse and outrage the public. He stated that he felt it was a bad example for the children of the school system and not a productive way to conduct these**

proceedings. Karmozyn and other members of the School Committee agreed with Brizard and asked that he not consider the statements of one member to be representative of the entire committee.

Brizard further indicated a 3.9% increase for the teachers seemed to him excessive and contributory to the problems the schools are now experiencing. He then questioned the superintendent about the function and cost effectiveness of the assistant superintendent.

#### **11. Arthur Hurley, Budget Board Chair**

Hurley asked about a large increase in support staff costs. VonVillas, indicated that while these positions were previously covered 100% by grants, the grant monies no longer cover the costs entirely. Hurley also indicated that he expected to have more questions once the Superintendent had the opportunity to respond to the written questions provided to her at this meeting.

#### **12. Laurie Sullivan, A.T. Levy Principal**

Sullivan restated the importance of all-day kindergarten in order to achieve the goals set forth by national and state initiatives especially in the area of literary achievement. She noted that the school only has one aide who moves from class to class and in many instances this is not enough.

#### **13. Richard Trovich, Burrillville High School Principal**

**Mr. Trovich restated all that has been gained in the schools and all that is in jeopardy of being lost. He indicated that positions have been lost in Math, English, Science, Social Studies, World Languages, Applied Science and Technology, as well as the loss of a nurse, and media center specialist. The discretionary budget has decreased significantly to a point where administrative school dances fund textbook purchases. He is concerned about how the school will meet a requirement next year of 5.5 hours of instruction when current measures are increasing downtime. He stated that when he came to the school the attitude was “This is Burrillville, what do you expect” and stated that attitude has turned completely around to a point where students have a great deal of pride in their school and its accomplishments. He doesn’t want to see the reversal of that attitude.**

#### **14. Carl Mueller, Burrillville High School Visual Arts Teacher**

**Mueller addressed the 3.9% increase for the teachers by stating that for many teachers it was a “wash” as they spend much of their own money on supplies and books in order to teach their classes. He stated it is not uncommon for teachers to drive long distances to get deals on supplies, search “eBay” for book deals and haggle at half price book stores for texts because they love teaching and do not want to shortchange their students. His background is in business and while he can appreciate the challenges of balancing a budget, he**

**feels the school's programs can not be cut any further.**

**15. Charles Boucher, Burrillville High School Science Teacher**

**Boucher offered a letter that he wrote to the School Committee last year expressing concerns about the proposed cuts to his nationally acclaimed science program. The letter predicted that should these cuts be made, the success of the program would be seriously undermined. More importantly he stated, by cutting programs like woodshop and others many students would find themselves disenfranchised. Boucher expressed anger, sadness and frustration at watching years of work and success systematically be dismantled by budgetary constraints. He concluded with the question "how far is this going to go?"; he indicated that the question needs to be answered in fairness to the teachers who work so hard to build these programs and the students who have come to benefit from them.**

**16. Mindy Ryan, Burrillville High School English Department Chair**

**Ryan told the Board that as a result of cuts students at the high school are no longer offered speech classes and that the drama offerings have been drastically reduced. The school newspaper is no longer produced on any regular basis as there is not a journalism class offering. The textbooks, media center books, videos and DVD's are outdated and in many cases useless. The emphasis on the literary component with the "No Child Left Behind" Act and RIDE**

**initiatives is putting a tremendous burden on the English Department staff.**

**17. Eric Tupper, Burrillville High School Teacher**

**Tupper reiterated that a teacher and parent of young children in the school system, he is fearful that the quality of education is seriously at risk of being compromised should further budget cuts be made.**

**18. Gordon Richardson, Burrillville School System Facilities Manager**

**Richardson indicated the building maintenance is also suffering as a result of budget cuts. There has been a reduction in staff as well as a lack of funding for service contracts. He fears that continuing in this way will result in large expenditures for repairs in the future.**

**19. Paul Conway, parent**

**Conway expressed concern as a parent of students in the high school and offered a desire to maintain the high quality of education in Burrillville and the willingness to help in any way necessary.**

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

**A motion was made by Brizard and seconded by Molloy to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 P.M. With no further discussion the vote in favor was unanimous.**